



Online and Offline

**Academy of Sharing: Using Social
Media to Build a Social Movement**

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Users of Twitter and other social media platforms connect with each other to build an Indonesian foundation committed to sharing, learning, and bridging gaps between the classroom and the professional world.

One day in 2010, Ainun Chomsun opened her Twitter account and decided which of the maximum 140 characters available to her she would use to compose a message to a man she had never met. She was a free lance public relations consultant in Jakarta who had turned to social media in search of information that would help her transition to another career and make friends in the process. The man was Subiakto Priosoedarsono, a prominent Indonesian advertising executive with many Twitter followers. In the necessarily efficient world of Twitter, followers sometimes addressed him by two characters in his first name: Bi.

“I want to learn to be a copy writer, Mr Bi, tell me how?” Ainun tweeted.

“I teach, you interested?” Subiakto tweeted back a few minutes later.

Ainun, pleasantly surprised, and Subiakto began to work out the details in a series of



Student registers at Academy of Sharing class in Jakarta.

tweets, with him offering to teach a class in his office at Hotline, his advertising agency, as long as she could get 10 other people together who wanted to learn at the same time. It was a pretty good offer: no teacher fee, no venue fee, no enrollment fee. Everything free.

In less than an hour, she had her 10 other classmates. The response was hardly viral by today's standards, but the concept struck chords. "No requirements," Ainun tweeted to the other potential students, using the hashtag *#copywriting*: "just come on time and be willing to learn." In a few days more, 20 students had signed up, including many of Subiakto's other followers, such as Budiono Darsono, a founder of detikcom, one of the leading online media in Indonesia.

Ainun, Budiono and the others came to the Hotline agency office on July 9, 2010 to hear Mr. Bi, the CEO of Hotline, speak about copywriting.

It was the online world coming together offline to share, learn, and meet – people joined by new technology making new connections the time-tested way, in-person.

During class, the students tweeted in real time, broadcasting to their followers what they were learning and how much they were enjoying it.

Subiakto, after class and for the next few hours, was amazed to see the tweets flying back and forth. It was getting at least a bit viral now. And then he tweeted: "Next session practice. Interested? *#copywriting*".

"Definitely. I was just thinking out loud about it," Ainun tweeted back.

Over the next few weeks, Ainun organized additional classes with new students and new teachers, including Budiman Hakim, another advertising expert. Hakim offered Ainun some advice – come up with a brand name for what she was developing so



Imam Subchan, national chairman of Academy of Sharing.

that classes would be easier to find on Twitter. At the time, Ainun had been searching for information about the Academy Awards. *Bingo!* The project she was developing amounted to a kind of academy, not for film, but university-level teaching by professional experts, outside the confines of tuition fees, enrollment requirements, grades, diplomas, and all the rest.

“And because, from the beginning, the project has been based on the idea of sharing, I added, ‘sharing’,” Ainun recalled. And so there emerged the brand, Academy of Sharing, now a 21st Century social movement that has spread to 23 Indonesian cities. The brand translates in the Indonesian language to *Akademi Berbagi*. Fittingly, given how it began, the words were truncated in the social media universe to, simply, Akber.

Though some changes have been made and need to be made to help Akber manage its growth and maintain quality, it is still driven by the same key principle – alternative access to free education by leading experts for whichever students want to learn in classes organized by volunteers, in the way Ainun did when she, as Akber’s founder but also first volunteer, assembled the details for Subiakto’s first class.

Over the next five years, some 30,000 students attended about 1,000 Akber classes, which were led by about 200 teachers assisted by about 200 volunteers. Akber continues to rely on the Twitter platform, but now also uses Facebook, Instagram and blogs as well as its website to communicate with audiences that are always coming and going, before and after sharing and learning.

Ainun and friends and professional colleagues she enlisted to help her nurture Akber work for free. They now sit on a board of advisors she created in 2015 to legally formalize what was until that time a highly informal organization. But the board of advisors still meets in coffeehouses or conference rooms friends might lend. Apart from the classes they teach or the occasional field trip to sort out some problem, they leave most of the details of running Akber to their army of volunteers. That

decentralization sometimes leads to problems, but Akber is working on solutions.

“Every volunteer has to bring their own commitment and keep that commitment,” said Imam Subchan, an international trader who taught an early class in entrepreneurship and founded an Akber branch in the city of Solo, a renowned center of traditional Indonesian culture. “Connecting the dots in public space is difficult, but Akber is connecting.”

ACADEMY OF SHARING

After six years of working for a non-profit research center, Ainun Chomsun felt maxed-out, and so she took a deep breath and resigned. She had an accounting degree, but wanted something new. For that, she had to acquire new skills and knowledge. Skills are another matter, but by 2010 acquiring knowledge had never been easier. Like many hundreds of millions of people across the world, she had a virtually inexhaustible library at home – her Internet-connected computer – and another one always close by, in the form of her smartphone.

At the time, in their increasingly wired country, Ainun and many millions of mainly under-35 Indonesians were creating a fundamentally new culture in Southeast Asia rooted in interactive social media. It enabled everyone to create individual and group platforms for distributing knowledge: websites, blogs, and many others, including Twitter. The latter was designed to enable users to send or tweet and re-tweet to others brief bits of information about themselves, events, and issues, and links to material in that vast library built by the Internet. Inevitably, some corners of the library became contaminated by criminals and mischiefs looking to exploit and harm, but most users, once burned, learned to be wary.

Twitter also enabled users to monitor or follow the tweeted comments and links of those they considered experts. It was a tool optimized for sharing and learning.

Twitter was invented in 2006. Four years later, it was all the rage in Indonesia, where Ainun – zeroing in on new media as her next career move

– had become a follower of many experts in the advertising, marketing, media, and digital communications fields, including the advertising executive who was CEO of his own agency, Subiako Priosoedarsono. The tweets they exchanged on June 26 led to a national phenomenon and trust in the Akber brand, and it all turned on his offer to teach for free a class on copywriting. He could have been paid for speaking to advertising agencies and professional copywriters. Why did he offer to teach amateurs?

His reply reflects the sunny side visitors to the country see when they meet many of its people – courtesy and generosity with a smile. “I just wanted to share my knowledge and skills,” he said. “I do all this happily and voluntarily.”

That attitude, the willingness to share, particularly by young professionals for younger people in the early years of their careers and students in or just out of university, was crucial to Akber taking off. Budiono, the digital media executive who was a student in the first class, later became a teacher and turned his office at detik.com into the venue for classes in online communication. “By having a face-to-face class, the knowledge sharing becomes more intensive and deeper,” he said.

In time, one of Akber’s early volunteers, Yhanuar Purbokusumo, came up with a slogan that further embedded the attitude into its DNA: Sharing Makes You Happy. “Those who have the knowledge will share their knowledge, those who have the venue will share their space and those who have the time and energy will share by becoming the class organizer,” Ainun said. Those who embraced Akber and took part in its growth online and off became known as “Akberians.”

The uniqueness and sheer simplicity of Akber-style learning and its accompanying chance to make connections also underpinned its early and ongoing appeal. “By attending Akber classes, you get opportunities for free,” said Yanti Nisro, deputy managing director of a market research firm in Jakarta who teaches Akber classes on executive management and serves on its board of advisors. For a previous employer, she once conducted a

workshop for clients that was “expensive,” she said. “For Akber, it is the same quality class, but it’s free.”

GARDEN OF STUDENTS

For its founder, the upbeat, harmonious atmosphere that took hold in Akber classes was an echo of an earlier Indonesian innovation, a school founded in 1922 by Ki Hadjar Dewantara, a leader of the nation’s independence movement and a pioneer in education during Dutch colonial times. The school offered education opportunities to indigenous commoners on the island of Java, the fourth largest island in the Indonesia archipelago that is today home to more than half its 250 million people. Before 1922, formal education was restricted to the colonials and to Javanese noblemen such as he. The school was known as *Taman Siswa*, or Garden of Students.

The Akberians, Ainun believes, come together like students in a tranquil garden, where access to education is not restricted by economic status, social class, religion or race. “Learning can happen anywhere, no walls,” she said. “Everybody can come and come happily.”

The user-friendliness and benefits of Akber-style education made expansion beyond Jakarta inevitable. To help pave the way and protect the brand from being usurped by other people or movements, a new Twitter account was created in October of 2010 to give Akber its own Twitter “handle,” or username. This separated Ainun’s personal matters from Akber matters. People would tweet the organization now, rather than Ainun who for organizational and leadership purposes also became its de facto national chairman. Someone had to be in charge.

The expansion occurred in two basic ways – Akberians in Jakarta suggesting classes to friends in other cities; people in other cities contacting the Twitter handle after learning about Akber on social media platforms. The first class outside Jakarta came about in the first way, and was held in Bandung, 110 miles away in West Java and the third largest city in Indonesia with 2.4 million people (compared to Jakarta’s 10 million). The first



Ainun Chomsun, founder of Academy of Sharing.

class was on financial planning and taught by Aidil Akbar Madjid, a local expert. It was held on Jan. 21, 2011, about six months after Ainun and Subiakto exchanged tweets in Jakarta.

The story of Akber moving to another city beyond Jakarta illustrates the second route toward expansion. One afternoon a couple months later in Solo, a city of 500,000 in central Java, four friends and community-minded businessmen met for afternoon coffee and began talking about how to organize meaningful opportunities for people after the work day was done. One of the men, Imam Subchan, who had built an import-export business centered around natural stone, was an infrequent visitor to Internet forums who knew nothing about Akber. Two of his friends, however, users of Twitter and Facebook, knew about the social movement taking hold in Jakarta, and Imam liked what they told him.

Imam hopped on a plane to Jakarta to visit Ainun and talk about replicating Akber in Solo. It was the start of an enduring connection with

Akber, as a volunteer, teacher, and leader of the soon-to-be-founded Solo branch. The first Akber Solo class was held on May 14, 2011. The topic was “City Branding = City Economy” and was jointly taught by a creative consultant and a university lecturer and researcher.

“It wasn’t formal education, but giving everyone an opportunity to learn,” Imam said. “People go to universities for degrees. With us, they are looking to fill gaps in skills and expertise.”

As Imam discovered, the Akber format makes it very easy to replicate while tailoring it to different interests in branches. That same year, Rifky Zulkarnaen, a university student and social activist, tweeted to the Akber handle about whether he could start a class in Bangkalan, his hometown in Madura.

The reply came a few moments later in exceptionally terse Twitterese: “Can”.

Rifky was under the impression Akber must have a formal procedure for starting a class, and

so in a follow-up tweet he asked what he had to do. The message that came back essentially amounted to: just open the class.

Over the next three days, through Twitter, Facebook, and offline word-of-mouth, Rifky assembled a class of 20 students that was taught by his brother in their home. The topic, aptly, was time management.

CLASS COMPONENTS

Several Akberians, including its founder and those on Akber's six-person board of advisors, have at one time or another performed in each of Akber's principal roles – teacher, student, and volunteer. All the roles must be filled for anything to happen. And everyone in each has to be happy with the result, or it won't happen again.

“If people aren't happy, they quit,” Imam said.

Swastika Nohara is another graduate of Subiako's inaugural class on copy writing who became an Akber teacher. She is a film scriptwriter who lectures on cinematography for a private university in Jakarta; she is also a two-time winner for best original screenplay in the Maya Awards, created in 2012 by online film fans to recognize local productions. Her expertise and reputation bring many students to her Akber classes on script writing and film editing.

She described her classes for a mixture of students, professionals and those just beginning their careers, as “teasers”. Students particularly interested in her subjects as potential careers would have to put a lot more effort into honing their skills and knowledge for film careers to happen. Some students enrolled simply because they wanted to understand a subject more deeply, or compare their knowledge to that of the teacher's.

“They're not necessarily coming because they want to be a movie director,” Swastika said.

For Sita Sidartha, a marketing and communication lecturer at another university in Jakarta, Akber classes are a two-way street. What she learns in Akber classes on similar subjects from non-academic experts on those topics informs her university lectures. Many of the volunteers helping organize the Akber classes also work in the same

fields as the Akber teachers. “They know what they are talking about and what is happening *right now*,” she said. “So I have a lot of resources to ask.”

Roby Muhamad, a writer and entrepreneur who studied social networks while earning a Ph.D in sociology at Columbia University in the U.S., is another member of Akber's board of advisors who also has taught – in his case, human resources and volunteering. Each time, with the mainly younger professionals and students of Akber, he remembered what it was like for him when he was young and just starting out: the world was an amazing place; he needed someone to guide and inspire him.

“That is exactly the age where they're still trying to find their identity, looking for answers that cannot be addressed by formal education,” Roby said. “They need inspiration that touches their hearts and minds.”

The Akber students in Jakarta, the nation's economic and political capital, are mainly young professionals while Akberians elsewhere are mainly university students or recent graduates. The size of an Akber class varies, from as low as one to as many as 200, so far. Classes are normally two hours long and students are required to register in advance so that organizers can determine the right-sized venue. In the early days, Akber came to see that somewhere between 20 to 30% of registered students in some cities did not show for class, and it responded by “black-listing” them from registering for future classes. In time, however, Akber chose to build a “no-show” factor into registration. If a class was scheduled in a venue seating 100 people, up to 150 would be allowed to register.

Early on, Ainun and Akber's leaders also developed a few other policies. One was that classes must be free of any content that discriminated against people based on religious, racial, ethnic, and economic status. A second was that classes must not be used to promote a political party, interest or candidate. Classes about political systems were not banned, but organizers were required to submit class material to Ainun and her advisors for review prior to class to assure its neutrality.

On occasion but not often, Ainun or other Akber leaders have traveled to other cities to settle a dispute among volunteers about the content and leadership of classes. “Basically, in each city, we say to the volunteer organizers, ‘You are the leader, not us; you are in charge,’” said Yanti, the management expert and Akber advisory board member.

The number of volunteer organizers varies across cities according to the frequency of classes. In each city, their efforts are coordinated by a “headmaster”; after each Akber class, its students are invited to become volunteers, and they in turn will sometimes be designated the PIC, or person-in-charge of organizing future classes. Ainun designed the system so that Akberians feel vested in the movement.

One of Akber’s early volunteers became especially vested in the organization. Yhanuar Purbokusumo was one example. He worked in a small advertising agency and had taken several Akber classes and helped organize several others.

Then, with a letter of recommendation from Ainun in his back pocket, he moved a few notches up on the career ladder by applying for and winning a job at a bigger international agency.

“There is no financial benefit at all for organizing a class,” Yhanuar said. The benefit, as was clear in his case, was the networking, in-person.

ROLES AND RITUALS

It was not conceived with this objective in mind, but Akber’s informal and unofficial role in education in Indonesia ends up in alignment with a government view of education that was written into the nation’s laws in 2003. In an overhaul of its education system designed to set national standards for teachers, school facilities, and students, the government also for the first time mandated that every child receive nine years of free basic education. The overhaul came a year after a constitutional amendment stipulating that 20% of the national budget be committed to education. With



Students in Akber classes get expert advice for free.

its language, the new law emphasized the importance of education in developing human capital and the nation's economy.

It also emphasized one other point: communities should try to increase education opportunities beyond the ninth grade and help close gaps between the classroom and the world beyond it.

The law did not compel communities to do anything beyond the mandated minimum, and in any case Akber did not come along until seven years later, but in effect closing gaps, in a nation where educational standards are the same no matter where, is what Akber teachers try to do in most of their classes. In the real world, the diplomas of a formal education are not enough for success. "People need to keep on learning because of the speed of the digital era and global change," Ainun said. "If they do not keep on learning, they will be left behind."

To avoid being left behind, she added, people need a tool the digital age has made more possible – networks of friends, colleagues, and peers whose size far exceed those of only a few decades ago.

That network paid off for Yhanuar, the friend of Ainun and early Akber volunteer who came up with the "Sharing Makes You Happy" slogan and won a new job with her support at a larger advertising agency. He said his industry is "very liberal" about education and will hire people from different disciplines. "As long as you have the skill and capacity needed by the company, you are accepted," he said.

Another early Akber supporter, Budiono Darsono, who helped form one of the nation's leading online media sites, said that today many companies in the digital world do not even ask about diplomas. "The most important thing is the employee has the skill to do the job," he said.

Akber brought together its extensive network of volunteers together for the first time at a convention in 2012 in Bogor in West Java. It was another example of people who knew each other only online coming together offline to discuss common issues. Roby Muhamad, the sociologist who sits on the Akber board, said what Akber called Local Leaders Day (LLD) was a "ritual", a necessary

ingredient for a social movement that relied on the goodwill and communal vision of its volunteers. Organizations experience many ups and downs, but rituals keep spirits high, he said.

That organizational spirit led to moments some students, volunteers, and teachers will never forget. Yanti remembers a LLD motivation session on how through perseverance and hard work people can fulfill dreams. At one point, the speaker's words set off an impromptu burst of patriotic pride, with everyone repeatedly shouting *Indonesia! Indonesia! Indonesia!* It was a moment that "sent chills up my spine," Yanti said.

Akber has other rituals – students shout the "Sharing Makes You Happy" slogan at the end of each class and then pose for a mandatory group photograph – but the LLD, which drew 100 volunteers from 17 cities, was a ritual designed for volunteers to get on the same page with Akber's anti-discrimination and no-politicking policies as well as on class administration and leadership. Ainun, Yanti, and Imam also coached on the importance of volunteer networking and on keeping up with ever-changing social media tools and platforms.

"When they join Akber, volunteers have to learn to solve problems," said Imam. "That is how Akber can sustain."

In 2014, a second LLD was held in Salatiga in Central Java, and by that time the number of Akber volunteers had doubled to 200. So had the number of cities, with 34 now holding classes in response to local interests. The convention message was that Akber was a symbolic house; the integrity and quality of the home's foundation was determined by the efforts of volunteers who lived inside it.

Over the next year or so, however, some people lost sight of the message, and the Akber house began to show signs of instability. Some of Akber's early supporters in Jakarta moved on to other things. In some cities, teachers did not show for class. In others, partisan splits among volunteers over who was in charge of the Akber brand led to nothing happening. In others, volunteers simply lost



Class photo after Akber session on “How to be a Resilient Professional.”

their enthusiasm and commitment to sharing and learning. Akber considered a city inactive if three months went by without a class. Consequently, the number of active cities dropped from 34 to 23.

In March of 2015, Akber staged another ritual that it called a Local Leaders Meeting (LLM). The meeting was for headmasters only, the lead volunteers in each of the remaining cities. The theme of the meeting reflected the collective board of advisors’ state of mind at the time: “Conquering New Challenges.” One of the meeting’s purposes was to strengthen the headmasters’ commitment to the brand and their administrative capacity for strategic planning. Another more important purpose was to tell the headmasters what steps Akber’s leaders had been taken to create a new and literal foundation for the Akber house.

INFORMAL TO FORMAL

As Akber spread to other cities after those first tweets and classes in Jakarta, Ainun and her advisors began to realize they might need a formal framework for coordinating and promoting growth while preserving quality and integrity. The need became abundantly clear as they organized the first LLD meeting in 2012. A few Akber supporters had donated enough money since 2010 for Akber to

pay for the LLD venue and food, and to reimburse volunteers for their travel expenses. But since Akber did not exist on paper, there was no way to accept or distribute money, except through Ainun’s personal bank account.

“This was not healthy,” she said.

The situation made Ainun feel vulnerable to unwarranted suspicion, and it certainly was not going to encourage people or corporations outside the immediate Akber circle to donate money for future LLD meetings. For that, Akber needed a separate legal identity. Not long after the first LLD meeting, the process required in Indonesia for establishing Akber as a non-profit foundation began. It took almost two years to overcome various bureaucratic issues and to secure a patent for the foundation’s name, *Akademi Berbagi*, but it was completed in time to tell the headmasters about it at the LLM in March of 2015.

While the legal process unfolded, Ainun and her advisors decided on other steps Akber needed to take in order to grow in an orderly and sustainable way. They devised a tentative organizational chart for discussion at the next LLD meeting. It featured a formally appointed board of advisors at the top, in charge of policy, with a national chairman and vice chairman responsible for carrying it out,

assisted in a descending chain by a coordinator of volunteers, a social media coordinator, and headmasters, each with their own volunteer committee.

The new Akber would also include a secretariat, an administrative office for handling the kind of financial details that had made Ainun feel uncomfortable. Akber would seek to raise additional funds so that the secretariat could be run by paid staff, as opposed to volunteers, a much better way to handle and account for money.

The organizational model and other regulations and policies would be included in the Articles of Association designed to put all the volunteers on the same playing field and assure new donors of Akber's transparency and accountability. Any conflicts in the field among volunteers would be settled according to the Articles of Association.

While they worked out the organizational changes and Articles of Association, Ainun and the board of advisors considered and then adopted other major changes. Moving beyond the early "just-open-the-class" approach, Akber would provide more support for the launch of new branches that would include suggested curricula for classes that had been taught in other branches. In addition,

Akber would recommend and possibly send teachers to cities requiring expertise unavailable locally.

Some of the changes implied the need for additional donations or other sources of income, and to address that issue Akber adopted a fundamental change in the way it operated. It would form partnerships with companies willing to sponsor an Akber class in exchange for small donations.

The arrangement would be limited to the main branch in Jakarta for fear of undermining the underlying spirit of volunteerism in other branches. Companies could use 10 minutes of a class to promote a product or service. They could also place a promotional banner in class and tout the company using Akber's Twitter handle. They could also provide the volunteer expert teacher, but the teacher's class materials could not be used to sell or promote products or services. To make sure, Akber's leaders would review the material beforehand.

After Akber's legal formation, the partnership program was introduced. Few partners have come forward, however, and little money has been raised.

The biggest change in Akber came in August of 2015. Ainun Chomsun, well into her new career now in digital marketing and working for two



Akber teachers Dian Siswarani (front row, left) and Yanti Nisro listen to another teacher's lesson.

companies, turned over day-to-day responsibility for Akber to the entrepreneur in Solo who was an infrequent online visitor and had never heard of Akber until friends told him about it when they met for coffee in 2011. Imam Subchan, who contacted Ainun after sensing the value of replicating Akber in his hometown, agreed at her urging to become the new national chairman and spend half of his time growing Akber.

As a self-made entrepreneur, he could afford it, and after serving as founder and first headmaster of Akber Solo, he had the experience. Ainun remained a member of the board of advisors to focus on developing curricula for volunteers and on raising money to fund yearly LLM and LLD rituals.

Imam became devoted to Akber after attending an early Solo class – “All About Film” – to which a group for the hearing-impaired had been invited and for which Akber provided an expert in sign language. After the class, members of the group expressed their appreciation through their interpreter; they had acquired knowledge they had not been able to get in their specialized school. A gap had been bridged. Imam said that during that class he came to see there are no barriers to learning. Akber could share with anyone.

Imam is 41 years old and a parent. He expects to spend a lot of time in the field working with the volunteers, who are mostly 20 to 25 years old, which he called “very young.” Akber intends to strengthen the volunteer committees in its 23 cities before turning its attention to further expansion.

“I will have to become like a father to the volunteers,” he said during an interview in early 2016, smiling and poking fun at himself, in a gentle and generous Indonesian way.

LESSONS AND CHALLENGES

Organizations across the world, of course, already well know the power of social media to provide information to their audiences, customers, and beneficiaries, but Akber created a new non-profit space. The venue evolved from what now seems a simple idea, but that view overlooks another simple idea:

no one had thought of it yet. Akber created online communities of people with specific interests and brought them together offline to share and learn in classes organized by volunteers.

In addition to also providing connections, the offline meetings assured online users cautious about Internet communication that Akber was real, not a scam. The fundamentally necessary contributions of the volunteers also vested them in Akber’s success. They did not just help out; they for the most part ran it.

Though it may operate in a unique space, Akber’s spread to other cities shows some models of service can be replicated and adapted without much difficulty. Ainun’s advice for organizations that want to try something new? “Keep it simple and easy to duplicate and it will usually last longer.”

Ainun herself embodies another lesson, as the founder of an organization so often does. Determination and perseverance are required to start something new and keep moving it forward. As a volunteer, teacher, and national chairman, Ainun was a hands-on leader. She was always present for classes she organized and for those organized and taught by others in Jakarta. She now sits on the board of advisors, but continues to be, Yanti said, the “glue” that holds Akber together.

“Akber can’t be separated from Ainun,” Yanti added. “She is the driver.”

As it also often is, organizational change takes place when leaders recognize the need and time to do it. When it became a formal foundation, which it had to do to manage growth, maintain quality, and attract donors, Akber also developed new ways of providing guidance and direct assistance to its volunteers in the field. It became less hands-off to more, how can we keep this growing in the best way? The response to those ideas that it gets from volunteers at the third Local Leaders Day meeting planned for 2016 will be an important indicator of Akber’s future trajectory.

Those who remember the fury of tweets that led to the origin of Akber in 2010 accept the necessity of change, but also want to assure that the change

from informal-to-formal does not fundamentally alter Akber. Budiono, the online media pioneer in Indonesia who is a teacher in Akber, said it is vital to retain the “spirit of sharing”.

“That is the soul of Akber,” he said.

Even though as part of its evolution Akber will offer more support to its volunteers, its leaders believe that holding onto volunteers is one of the future’s big challenges. One of the reasons Akber dropped from 34 cities to 23 is that volunteers lost interest. The advisory board attributes that mainly to age; many cities depended on the wisdom, talent, and determination of university students or those recently graduated.

“Millennials are a different kind of animal,” Yanti said. “They are very active, but they get bored easily.”

The extra support for volunteers Akber announced with its legal formation, as well having a new national chairman with the time to devote half of his energy to Akber, might help with that problem. But another solution might simply lie in the soaring number of Internet users in Indonesia – from 55 million in 2010 to 73 million in 2015, according to the Indonesian Ministry of Communication and Information. That is about 29% of the population, remarkable for a developing country, and 63 million of them are online for five hours a day. About 58% are between 12 to 34 years of age.

The numbers suggest that a large number of millennials can become vested in Akber, as volunteers, persons-in-charge, headmasters, and maybe, once they gain their professional footing, teachers, if only for enough time for Akber to cement its changes and then use what it learns to expand to new cities. That is what it intends to do, aided by its first targeted fund-raising campaign, which it hopes will fund either a Local Leaders Meeting or Local Leaders Day every year.

The reputation of Akber, and the trust its brand has earned in an online world that can be misused and abused will complement that effort. “To keep this spreading is still the major issue, expanding it geographically, looking for the spirit,” said Imam.

“My goal is to help keep it growing by expanding the number of volunteers.”

That was the underlying message of Imam’s remarks during a class in Jakarta in December of 2015. More than other factors, Akber’s reputation and ultimately its fate will turn on the growth and spirit of its volunteers. The teaching lineup for the Jakarta class was a powerful illustration of Akber’s current reputation and value. The title of the class also could have been used in a session on Akber’s future: Indonesia Outlook.

The teachers included Poltak Hotradero, head of research at the PT Indonesia Stock Exchange, who spoke about what lies ahead for the economy, and Jonathan Tenggara, manager of digital strategy and planning PT XL Axiata, who spoke about trends in technology. They were joined by Yusuf Arifin, editor in chief of CNNIndonesia.com, who surveyed the media landscape, and Roby Muhamad, the Akber board member, entrepreneur, and sociologist who spoke about trends in human resources.

They were joined at the front of the class by the Akber changing guard – Ainun Chomsun, the founder and now former national chairman, and Imam Subchan, the new national chairman. As the class came to an end, Imam stood and recalled how he grew up in a different political climate in Indonesia, a time when he and his friends “had to hide to hold a discussion and learn” until Suharto was forced to resign in 1998 after three decades of oppressive rule.

But that was in the past now. Akber had created a national public platform open to all for learning and sharing with experts, thanks to its network of volunteers. For the platform to stay strong, the volunteers have to be happy, and that is what Akber will emphasize over the next five years, he said, before quoting the organization’s sunny Indonesian slogan, the one it adopted five years before: “Don’t ever forget to be happy, because sharing makes you happy.” 🌍

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QUANTITATIVE INDICATORS

Financial

Planned budget or income versus actual expenditure for the fiscal year	Budget: under development Expenditure: under development
Income composition by source: individuals, corporations, events, trusts, other (please specify)	Foundations: NA NGOs/ associations: NA Corporations: NA Individuals: NA
Income composition: domestic versus international	Domestic: 100% International: 0%

Personnel

Staff retention rate	NA, all volunteers
Turnover rate	NA, all volunteers
What is the board composition?	Occupation: manufacturer, 1; academia, 1; human resources, 3 Gender: men, 4; women, 1
How many meetings does the board hold per year?	2
How many staff members are there?	NA, all volunteers
How many staff members have attended some non-profit or management training course?	NA

*Quantitative Indicators Continued***Organizational**

Do you publish an annual report?	Under discussion
How many sites/locations do you currently operate in?	23 cities across Indonesia
Do you measure results?	Yes. Activities tracked include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Number of classes conducted - Number of students who attend - Number of online references
What types of outreach?	Print, social media, TV, radio
Do you regularly meet with government representatives?	No
If yes, on a scale of 1-3 how close is the relationship with government? 1 = not close; 2 = & somewhat close; 3 = very close	Closeness of relationship = 1